

PERFECT PITCH

Practice voice warm-up techniques for a great performance.

BY TONI MCALLISTER

WHETHER YOUR CRAFT IS ACTING OR SINGING, YOUR VOICE IS YOUR INSTRUMENT. KNOWING HOW TO WARM IT UP PROPERLY IS CRUCIAL TO DELIVERING YOUR BEST WORK. HERE, THREE PROFESSIONALS OFFER EXPERT ADVICE FOR VOICE WARM-UPS TO IMPROVE YOUR AUDITIONS AND PERFORMANCES.

Kristin Linklater is a legendary stage actress who got her start at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Through years of dedicated work, she's become famous off stage as well as the leading authority on voice and text training. She's authored two books, "Freeing the Natural Voice" and "Freeing Shakespeare's Voice," and is currently a professor of theater arts at New York's Columbia University. Linklater says nerves often get in the way of a good performance. "Nervousness causes tension; tension makes the diaphragm tighten; one's breathing goes up into the upper chest; the throat tightens and the voice tends to get small or shrill." As a performer struggles to appear "real, relaxed and true," it just creates a terrible "falseness."

Linklater explains that voice warm-up brings about relaxation and a better performance. Even if your nerves are under control, you still need to warm up vocally because your everyday voice isn't appropriate for acting or singing. "The everyday voice is utilitarian," Linklater says. "The stage requires an expressive voice. A voice warm-up warms up the whole actor—the emotional, the intellectual and the physical. In the course of a good warm-up, you shed the distracting doings of the day and fully enter the realm of imagination."

What if you don't aspire to work on a live stage, but instead are aiming for television or film? Linklater says it makes no difference—a well-trained, warmed up voice is just

as important. "There can be a misperception that if you don't have to project your voice from stage to audience and instead are working with a microphone, your everyday voice is sufficient. But voice work is not just projection and audibility, it's authenticity and intelligibility," Linklater says. "In the same way the camera picks up your inner life, the microphone picks up all the nuances of thought and feeling—or lack thereof."

Easy Exercises: Singers

Elissa Weiss is a professional singer who has performed with the New York Philharmonic and the American Symphony Orchestra, and has sung at legendary venues such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. For more than 15 years, she has also been a voice teacher. Working from her New York City voice studio, Everybody Can Sing, she gives private and group singing lessons to students of varied professional backgrounds. Weiss says that warming up your voice before an audition is similar to warming up for a jog. "The voice works by muscles, and muscles have to be warmed up," she says. Muscles in the larynx, which include the vocal folds (also referred to as vocal chords), along with surrounding muscles in the face, lips, jaw and tongue, must be warmed up first in order to sing well.

Weiss stresses to warm up gradually. "If I have a matinee concert, as soon as I wake up in the morning I'll do little exercises, and I'll just keep doing them until

